



PRESS RELEASE

# State Agriculture Officials Remind Horse Owners to Vaccinate Against Mosquito-Borne Diseases

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Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources

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**BOSTON** — The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) is advising horse owners to plan “spring shots” with their veterinarians to ensure proper protection from mosquito-borne diseases like

West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus (EEE).

“Getting these vaccines at the right time of year can provide horses protection for the whole mosquito season,” **said MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux.** “As West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus pose serious risks to horses, I encourage all owners to get their animals vaccinated promptly.”

Annual vaccinations should be administered during this time of year to ensure their animals are protected prior to the peak arboviral season beginning in late July, and to remain protective through the first hard frost. Owners are urged not to wait until positive cases are reported in their area, since it can take several weeks for an animal to be fully protected by a vaccine.

Horses and other equines infected by EEE and WNV develop neurologic symptoms that can sometimes lead to death. Other species such as pheasants, emus, llamas and alpacas can be affected as well. Owners should consult with their veterinarian regarding other at-risk species.


In addition to vaccination, owners should reduce potential mosquito breeding sites on their property by eliminating standing water from containers such as buckets, tires, and wading pools - especially after heavy rains. Water troughs may provide mosquito breeding habitat and should be cleaned periodically during the summer months to reduce mosquitoes near paddock areas. Horse owners should consider keeping horses in indoor stalls during times of peak mosquito activity between dusk and dawn to reduce their risk of exposure to mosquitoes. Use of approved repellents should also be considered.


If an animal is suspected of having WNV or EEE, owners are required to report to DAR’s Division of Animal Health by calling 617-626-1795 and to the Department of Public Health (DPH) by calling 617-983-6800.


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The Department's mission is to help keep the Massachusetts' food supply safe and secure, and to work to keep Massachusetts agriculture economically and environmentally sound.

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